GOVERNMENT

Servant, Not Master

ZAMAN ALI

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To My Mother, Yasmeen Sadaf

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Need of the Government

I

Is there any need to have power or authority upon anyone? How can we lack the self-rule, power, and discipline if we call ourselves rational beings? Do we need someone's direction or path to live a life? Is having some people to rule over any society or nation is necessary? Why are there governments upon us and what's their primary purpose? Are governments there to rule over society or to serve the society or both? Can someone rule and serve their people at the same time? These and many like these are must-answer questions for every human, because everywhere there are a lot of governments and higher authorities in any nation, but those governments' need and purpose are required to be addressed.

II

If not all, then many people in us want to be in a controlling position where others could follow us, and it is a natural process that we rarely analyze — that in any social gathering, few people dominate many others. So, when we ask about the need for power or authority upon us, then the question becomes very vague because the phenomenon of power or authority is always among us in

every social gathering. But we need to discuss it here because it's the first step towards forming a government or control upon society.

III

Some say that authorities control society through laws and power, otherwise, men in full liberty begin to harm one another. For that reason, laws are necessary to control the men in society. The argument is acceptable as long as laws bind people not to harm each other and protect them. But the concern comes with authorities who execute those laws as all laws favor some and not all in society. And no matter how just or equal the laws are, the authorities that are required to compel others to follow the laws will always be unjust as they required power to execute the law. And few in power to instruct all others will lead toward a society of slaves, then how could it be any different from any society with no laws? But in a society with no laws, people offend each other, as they say, that without laws, men turn into beasts and laws bring nobility in men. But if the government or authorities make laws that favor them and then force others to follow them, then it is no better than a society of no laws. Again, they say we make laws with the consent of society and that's why when there is consensus about laws then there is no reason to complain about it. Then we should remind them again that it is not the laws that concerns here because laws will always favor some and be unjust to others, even if there is consensus. But for the sake of argument, we accept it that

laws upon which there is consensus are just laws, then after making laws the question is why we have to provide power to few people to execute the laws because it's the beginning toward an unjust society even with the just laws.

IV

On the other side, it's not possible to have no authority to oversee the laws or execute the laws because if people could follow the laws by themselves then we don't even need any laws. But the question remains about the need for authorities upon us because if there is the power needed to enforce the laws, then we don't even need the laws. After all, power can force people to do many things, with or without laws. Then the argument is that laws also prohibit authorities from abusing the power, which they have, and that's how laws help to create nobility in men because with laws everyone is answerable outside of their legal authorities. We could accept this argument and think about the need for laws for limiting everyone's role in society for the sake of protection of everyone from one another. And now it's simply that when someone broken the law, then society punishes that one so others could live in good and for punishing that one, we provide authority to few people who could punish them for their wrong acts against others. But in this entire act of creating nobility in men we provide authority to a few people and say it, the government, to make sure society follows the laws so everyone is protected. And we even limit their authority through laws so they don't abuse their authority, but we

forget, by providing authority to few people, that we are creating a group of people who are different from us because first of all they have more authority and resources than the rest of us. Second, now they have different interests from the rest of society because these groups of people are there to enforce others to follow the laws, and the rest of us are there to follow them as they instruct us. So, someone who enforces and someone who follows cannot be similar even if there is a legal restriction in their role because it's obvious that the enforcer is the masters and the followers are the servants. And no matter how much legal restriction we put around the authorities that enforce the laws, the fact is enforcing itself puts them in a higher position than the others and that is how laws that are about to create the nobility in men through justice in society, do the opposite by creating different groups of people, in which one group is above the others because their intrinsic role to have authority, puts them in the position where they are above others.

V

We lack self-imposed legal restriction and self-discipline and for that reason we need authorities to enforce these, otherwise social life is not possible. As in each family, there are some elders, who guide the others and lead them in many matters and situations, and it's a kind of hierarchy that goes on for the continuation of learning and experiences through generations. Again, for discussion, we could accept this argument as it defines the needs of

transformation of life and knowledge from one generation to another through the hierarchy in family and social life. And in the process, we need guidance, restriction, and discipline from some higher authority that could be family elders in personal life and government in social life. So, as the parents' role in the family is to guide children and they have authority over them in their childhood for their good, the government authority is necessary as a guide to good social life. And parents sometimes force their children in certain matters and impose discipline so too the government authority, which is required for imposing legal restrictions upon society. But we should know that society belongs to many adults who are responsible for their own and have different approaches toward different paths in life with their own beliefs and reasons. Parents could only impose a restriction upon their child to a certain age, after that it depends upon children to children how much influence they want from their parents in their life and their relationship depends on affection, respect, and belongingness. And government authority comes with certain individuals claiming to others that they can guide and restrict others better and they could provide better solutions to problems and help for more prosperity and righteous life. And as each person knows what's right and good for him and how he wants to live the life but when he comes in conflict with others in their approaches, then the claim of neutral authority becomes strong because that authority resolves their conflicts and guides and restrains them on those paths in a peaceful manner. But authorities are part of those conflicts and stand with some and against the others, and by siding, they not only provide strength to few people rather try to destroy many others in their way, so the neutrality factor in guiding and restraining people in

conflicts doesn't stand up on its own rather it becomes a liability to its citizens.

VI

For individuals' wrongdoing to other individuals, there is a demands for some force to be fearful from, so individuals don't hurt each other and even if they do, then that authority could forcefully make sure of punishment for wrongful acts. And authority could do that only if they have a powerful force above people, otherwise, there is no way to protect individuals from criminal activities of others. Of course, it's one of the right ideas behind the government authority over its citizens because other than this authority nobody is protected. For doing this, some laws could decide what's right and wrong, and there are procedures to punish the wrongdoer. Nobody could deny this argument for authority because everyone needs protection from others. But while protecting us from other individuals we should also be concerned about the harm which could come from those to whom we provide authority for our protection. And authorities could misuse their power and for any reason could hurt any individual, so people with authority who are there to protect us from many other individuals' wrong intentions could hurt us too for any reason. And the argument against this is that government authority is divided between different institutions and wrongdoing of any authority in any institution could be addressed by any other institution. As there are courts, accountability departments, and

journalists, and at different levels, anybody could complain and protect themselves from any harm from government authority. In democracies there are these institutions that could protect people from any misuse of authority and people could seek justice with the help of opposing forces of government but there is a limit to this protection. First, the process of justice is long and comes with many hurdles, and by the time justice is served, individuals have already been hurt a lot. Second, as people in government authority have different interests from people so many government institutions try to protect those who misuse their authority because it could take away their institutional reputation, support, and power and this could affect every other person in that institution, so, for this reason, they protect their wrongdoing with more harmful acts. With all these, the reasons for government authority's protection for individual harm to one another turn into more organized criminal activities because these institutions can hurt individuals in a more organized way especially when they not only have the power over their citizens rather have control over each step toward seeking justice.

VII

Even in democracies, to fight against misuse of government authority for any individual is difficult, and it's obvious that in any authoritarian regime the difficulty in controlling the misuse of power is on a different level. But an authoritarian regime could be most effective

against individual criminal activities because of their overwhelming power upon its people and the will to control everything. So, either with the agreement or with force, these governments form a promise of the protection of their people from internal and external forces, and through concentration of power in few hands they could fulfill their promise and ensure protection. But again, this concentration of power either through agreement or through force leads them toward handing over whole regime power to few hands. They not only lose their power but in exchange for protection, they lose their freedom and live as slaves. On the other side, as there is agreement among people upon this exchange and citizens are comfortable with their government because they could have prosperity and the government is representing their will through its power. For that, no one could say anything because when citizens are in agreement and have their total representation in their government even in an authoritarian regime, then let them live like this regardless, whether they don't have the power or freedom. Because they don't consider themselves slaves of their government as it's their will which provides all authority to their government and in each step those authorities represent them. So, when it comes to the will of people and their agreement upon the concentration of power in few hands to represent those people, we must know that our individuality doesn't submit willingly to any authority to another person but there is another factor behind this, that could relate with awareness, effectiveness, incompatibility, and fear among people. Because of all these, governments acquire more authority and create a regime where people are under the control of authorities in government and maybe they have their representation in that authority but

in comparison to free regimes those people are not living the life as they deserve for wrong reasons. As they say in response that if we, the people, are satisfied by our authorities then your judgment is wrong about this. So, the answer is in living through freedom because it has its pleasure as nobody could deny the life of freedom no matter how much privileges they have, but not freedom.

VIII

Ideological believes provides reasons for people to hand over a lot of authority and trust upon government authorities, as it's one of the most important reasons for people to ensure their believes are protected by their representatives in government. There are many people with different kinds of beliefs and each one wants power for the strength and free practice of those believes. For that, people ignore the government authority's wrongful power concentration because there is a lot more at stake. They even hand over more and more power to those authorities for this reason, as it's the only way for their ideological group to dominate others and protect itself. Because if their people in power have less authority and couldn't ensure protection for their ideas, then other groups could come into power and could dominate them and that is more hurtful than any individualistic misuse of power or having another group of people to rule. To ensure that no one loses their ideological rule, people begin to sacrifice every freedom they have as an individual because their believes as a group comes first and in the process of

having less government control upon them, they could lose that group power, so this reason helps government authorities to have more power. As there is competition in extracting power for each ideological sect and they want to create social institutions according to their ideologies. So, in this situation, all groups try to control society by putting more power in the hands of people that represent them in government, so they could control others rather than taking power from those institutions for their freedom. Because they are freer when others are under their control and government institutions and force could easily help them in this regard as through this, they could easily change the social dynamics in their favor. Because of all these reasons which help their cause through concentration of government power, it's difficult for those people to find out that maybe they are gaining ideological power but at the cost of individual freedom. But as for the individual freedom matters less than ideology and its authority, so they cannot see that in gaining collective ideology power through providing more power to their representatives, they are destroying their whole purpose of individuality in doing so. Because with each step to provide power to any authority, they are submitting their whole ideological support in the hands of few individuals and by doing this they are not helping themselves rather they are hurting their cause. But still for some who think of group success as more important than individual freedom it is hard to understand as they are willing to sacrifice individual freedom for an ideological cause. And for others who believe in individual freedom, it's a nightmare to sacrifice individual freedom so one could say it's the matter of perspectives from human to human. For that, we could say that anyone who could understand human individuality

and its importance, will never surrender his power for the social cause. But as social institutions are part of man's life and some individual sacrifices are necessary in this regard, then they always just need to be a question mark in this whole process otherwise both individuals and society lose themselves by handing over power in the hands of few individuals.

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It’s people who gave the authority and resources to the government, for the purpose to serve them at achieving desired social life, otherwise, the government itself is nothing.

The fundamental responsibility of government is to ensure our freedom, and its role of people to dictate the government and make it answerable according to their agreed demands.

Claiming all power for the purpose of prosperity and justice in society is conflicting to its own cause, rather authorizing individual authority is the just way toward a better society, because each individual has the right to decide about himself, and for collective decision making in society, all individual has the right to provide their input in it, after that majorities’ rule and minorities’ rights is the key to move forward, otherwise its destruction of society.

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